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JP 2 correction

Notes: Poems are "Ode to a Bombardier" and "The Return."

Authors unknown



Ode to a Bombardier

On a lonely road, through a cold, bleak night,
A grizzled old man trudged into sight;
And the people all whispered over their beers,
There goes the last of the Bombardiers.

What's a Bombardier? There came no reply,
The men turned silent—the women sighed;
As death-like silence filled the place,
With the gaunt, gray ghost, of a long, lost race.

It's hard to explain, that catch of breath,
As they seemed to sense the approach of death;
Furtive glances—from ceiling to floor,
'Til something, or someone opened the door.

The bravest of hearts turned cold with fear,
The thing in the door was a Bombardier;
His hands were boney, his hair white and thin,
His back was curved, like an old bent pin.
His eyes were two empty rings of black,
And he vaguely murmured, "Shack, Shack, Shack."
This ancient relic of the Second World War,
Crept 'cross the room and slouched to the bar.

They spoke not a word, but watched in the glass,
As the broken old man showed a worn bombsight pass;
And hollow tones from his shrunken chest,
Demanded a drink and only the best.

The glass to his lips, they heard him say,
"The bombay is open—the bombs are away;"
With no other word, he slipped through the door,
—And the last Bombardier was seen no more.

Author unknown

Poems reprinted, with permission from *The War Chronicle*
of John "Hank" Henry, September 1940-October 1945, An
Autobiography.

WINTER, DECEMBER 1975

The Return

*Written by a co-pilot enroute to base after a minimum
altitude strike against Mapanget in the Celebes Islands 21
November 1944—*

Five Minutes from the target,
The auto-pilot set;
The peaceful drone of engines,
Hands clammy, forehead wet.

Our attack was very successful,
We caught them by surprise;
We bombed and heavily strafed them,
Smoke poured up in the sky.

We may have left destruction,
In planes and bodies too;
But here beyond the target;
There's the quiet of the blue.

The sky's in all it's glory,
Of floating, fluffy clouds;
The large one rears it's cotton head,
The smaller ones it crowds.

And just beneath the water,
A melancholy blue;
It's waves are small, it's flashes bright,
As sunlight filters through.

We're at war, we know it well,
The targets just behind
But flying now, in nature's realm;
Her restfulness is kind.

For nature cares not if there's war,
The world is hers to roam;
And now our mission is complete;
It's peaceful going home.